

Welsh beef to be exported to the US for first time in over 20 years

- Merthyr Tydfil based Kepak Group Limited one of first businesses officially listed by the US Department of Agriculture's Food Safety Inspection Service as eligible to export beef to the USA
- UK beef industry estimates £66 million boost over the next five years

The first shipments of UK beef have departed for the USA today (30th September), marking an historic moment for UK farmers and food producers.

Following the USA's longstanding ban on EU beef – introduced in the wake of the BSE outbreak in 1996 – market access for UK beef was granted in March 2020. Welsh beef producers now have access to the US market for the first time in over 20 years.

Today's news means the sector can now begin to reap the economic benefits of trade with the US – with industry estimating beef exports will be worth £66 million over the next five years.

The first four UK food businesses, based in Wales and Northern Ireland, have now been officially listed by the US Department of Agriculture's Food Safety Inspection Service as eligible to export UK beef to the USA. Businesses include Merthyr Tydfil based Kepak Group Limited which can now start production and export of UK beef for US consumers. It is expected that in the coming months, more food businesses across Wales and the rest of the UK will be able to take advantage of this exciting new export opportunity.

The first shipment of beef originating from Foyle Food Group, Foyle Campsie in Northern Ireland is to be dispatched to the USA today, with further shipments from across the UK expected to commence in the coming weeks.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

Our beef is renowned as some of the best in the world for its high quality, food safety and welfare standards, and this landmark milestone means more people around the globe can enjoy our produce.

This is great news for our food and farming industry, who have estimated it will bring a £66 million boost to beef producers over the next five years alone, helping the sector go from strength to strength.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss said:

This is an historic moment for British farming, and one which could bring an estimated £66million opportunity for those who want to

export beef to the US.

This could be just the tip of the iceberg. The free trade deal we are negotiating with the US will create a host of export opportunities for British agriculture. We are seeking an ambitious and high standards agreement that benefits farmers and delivers for consumers.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:

The opening of the US market is excellent news for beef producers across Wales and highlights confidence in our world-renowned food and drink sector.

Unlocking this market is a major step forward for the sector and demonstrates the UK Government's commitment to boost exports of the best of Welsh produce.

As one of the world leaders for animal welfare standards, UK beef is globally recognised for its provenance, quality and traceability. Through the Food is GREAT campaign, the UK government aims to raise the international profile and reputation of food and drink from across the UK and help more food and drink companies export their produce abroad.

AHDB International Market Development Director Dr Phil Hadley said:

We are delighted to see the first shipments of beef heading to the US today for the first time in more than 20 years, representing a historic moment for UK farmers and producers. We are rightly proud of our industry, which has a reputation for producing high quality beef to some of the best welfare standards in the world.

The US represents an important potential market for our red meat exports and today's first shipment is the result of the hard work and persistence of industry and government to bring about this crucial next step. This important milestone will bring a fantastic boost to the sector and we look forward to seeing more of our red meat served up on dinner tables across the US in the months and years to come.

Karen Pierce, British Ambassador to the USA, said:

For the first time in over two decades, Americans will have the opportunity to taste the UK's world-class, delicious beef.

American consumers already have an appetite for a range of quality

British products, including fine cheeses, whisky, salmon and biscuits, and beef is sure to become popular in the States.

As we continue our current negotiations toward the UK-US free-trade agreement, I look forward to seeing how we can increase opportunities for Americans to experience the best of British products.

The US Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) Audit Report, a crucial step leading to British exporters being able to sell to the US, was published in March 2020, and confirmed that UK meat hygiene systems and controls are of a suitable, equivalent standard for products to be imported to the USA. The report noted that the whole of the UK meets the US's production requirements, therefore beef from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is eligible for exports.

Prior to this announcement, FSIS inspected multiple premises across the UK between July-August 2019. This inspection visit had in turn been preceded by years of numerous market access and technical discussions between the USA and the UK.

These inspections were led by Defra group and the UK Export Certification Partnership and hosted by the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB), in partnership with Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) and Hybu Cig Cymru (Meat Promotion Wales HCC) and other industry bodies, as well as UK national and Devolved Government Departments and Agencies.